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## NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF LA BAHÍA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO.

BETHEL COOPWOOD.

Official notes, entries, and reports made when the events occurred, being the lighted torch of actual observation and practical experience, enabling subsequent writers to correct or avoid popular errors, this article is intended to call attention to some Spanish data of this kind, with notice of the places where same may be found, without reflection upon anything heretofore written on the subject by authors of Texas history.

Under orders from Francisco Garay, then governor of Jamaica, in 1518-1519, Alonso Alvarez de Pineda ran the whole gulf coast from the southern cape of Florida to the mouth of the Pánuco river, and made a chart of it, showing thereon a bay he called "la Bahía del Espíritu Santo," and noting some of the most prominent points in its surrounding topography; and it is probable that Pánfilo Narvaez had a copy of this chart when he sailed from Florida in 1527; for Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca says of the bay where he and Lope de Oviedo first heard of their three countrymen being with another tribe: "By what appeared to us from it and what we saw, it is the one called de Espíritu Santo," showing that he knew already that there was a bay on that coast called by such a name.

In 1561, by virtue of a royal cedula, Angel de Villafañe and Jorge Seron ran the same coast and made a descriptive chart of it, the original of which exists in the archives of Mexico. It also shows the same bay in about the same manner Pineda's does; and in view of it many consultations of the Consejo de Indias, information given by the viceroy and cedulae of the king were conceived in relation to the gulf coast.

Whether La Salle had copies of or extracts from these charts, which had been in the public archives of Spain and Mexico for over 120 years before he sailed for the mouth of the Mississippi, and knew its bearing from such sources, but was deceived by the effect of the gulf currents on his ships, of which he was ignorant, may

not be certainly known now. But it is true he landed far to the westward of his aim; a circumstance having a direct connection with the history of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo.

Having landed and selected the site of his Fort St. Louis, La Salle sent out Jean Henrie to explore the country to the westward; and this man's experience and conduct form an important link in the chain of circumstances identifying Fort St. Louis with the "Presidio de la Bahía del Espíritu Santo." After considerable exploration and the formation of an alliance with an Indian tribe, he was captured by Spanish scouts from Monclova and taken to Monterey and thence to the City of Mexico, and there made a detailed statement of all he knew of La Salle's expedition. And so minute was his description of the place where the French landed and of the site of the fort, that from the descriptive charts of the coast then in the archives, the viceroy readily determined it was on Espíritu Santo bay; and he immediately sent orders to Alonso de Leon, then governor of Coahuila, to march to Texas with what troops he already had and such as he could readily equip, to take from the French the lands they might have appropriated in the province and drive them out, or exterminate them, in order to secure the dominion and possession of New Spain in that region. And by means of such description de Leon was enabled to march directly to the French fort, where he arrived April 22, 1689, and found it already destroyed and the Frenchmen massacred, as he stated in his letter of May 16, 1689, to the viceroy, in which he asked for prisoners and permission to construct presidios to preserve the conquest of the country.

Some of the Frenchmen having escaped the massacre, obtained the compassion of a tribe of Indians near there, and were living with them when the Spaniards arrived. Two of these sought the protection of the Spaniards to get out from among the Indians, and were received with benevolence by Alonso de Leon and sent to the City of Mexico, where they gave the government detailed accounts of the sad events that happened to the French expedition in which they had figured.

With such sources of information, after having stood upon the ruins, de Leon certainly knew the site of Fort St. Louis, and there being no reason why he should misrepresent it, his report of its locality may be believed. His standing as an officer of the royal

army and as the king's deputy in the province of Coahuila depended upon the truth of his statements in his report, and he cannot be presumed to have dealt in falsehood in regard to such matters.

The viceroy having granted the request of the letter of May 16, 1689, Alonso de Leon made another campaign to Texas in 1690 with 150 soldiers and a number of priests and other people to establish towns, presidios, and missions deemed convenient for the defense of the country and the conservation of the Spanish dominion therein. And among others founded, was the presidio and mission of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo upon the ruins of the French Fort St. Louis, which continued to be occupied until the French invasion caused the few colonists, priests, and converted Indians of this, as well as those of the other missions, to retreat to San Antonio de Bexar.

Then, under orders from the viceroy, the Marquis de San Miguel de Aguayo, who had succeeded Alonso de Leon as governor of Coahuila, with 500 cavalry and six pieces of artillery, marched against the invading Frenchmen, to drive them back to their ancient possessions and leave the limits well defined, so that they might be respected by the authorities of New Spain and those of Louisiana.

In Bexar, the priests and the families of citizens who had abandoned the frontiers, united with the expedition of the marquis.

After successfully marching to the borders of Red River without encountering any resistance from the French, the Marquis received a royal cedula containing, among other things, the following instructions: "That inasmuch as a treaty of peace had been agreed upon in the Spanish and French cabinets, the war against the Gallo-Americans should not be further prosecuted on the frontiers of Mobile; that he should only secure the recovery of the province of Texas, settle it in the best manner possible, and fortify it, especially at la Bahía del Espíritu Santo": showing that the King of Spain then knew of the establishment of that name.

Under these instructions, the marquis withdrew his troops from their threatening positions before the French, and engaged in the restoration of the presidios and missions they had demolished; and among others, he ordered to be fortified in the best manner then possible, the presidio of San Antonio de Bexar and that of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo; the latter, as he says, having been erected at the same place where Roberto de la Sala built the presidio of San

Luis which had been demolished by the Indians. So wherever La Salle's Fort St. Louis stood, there the presidio of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo was first founded; and if known events that followed identify the spot, the careful historian may point it out.

After Escandon was commissioned to carry on the conquest and settlement of Nuevo Santander, he sent a captain with soldiers and settlers to take possession of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo, claiming it as within his territory, and held it until ordered to remove his people to the south side of San Antonio river, then declared the boundary. This order was obeyed by Captain Basterra's removing the troops, settlers, missionary priests, and converted Indians, together with everything movable, including the bell, door, and name of the place, and placing the establishment on the south side of the San Antonio river opposite the site selected for the new town of Balmaceda at Santa Dorotéa.

The royal engineer, Don Augustin Lopez de la Cámara Alta, made a map of Nuevo Santander, including in the northeastern portion of it the ancient site of the "Presidio y Mision de la Bahía del Espíritu Santo," showing it on the right margin of the "Río de Guadalupe," and placing the site of Santa Dorotéa on the left margin of the "Río de San Antonio," also showing the Espíritu Santo bay into which the two rivers emptied. It also contains a tracing of the route of the troops in going to the presidio and mission on the Guadalupe. It was filed in the archives at Mexico, in connection with the report of Don José Tienda de Cuervo, royal inspector general, in 1757, and is still intact in volume 29 of the historical branch of the general archives.

In volume 55 of the same archives there is a report made by Escandon with a tabulated statement of the towns, etc., he had established, containing these words: "Villa de Balmaceda en Santa Dorotéa. \* \* \* A este paraje se removió el Presidio y Mision de la Bahía del Espíritu Santo." (Town of Balmaceda at Santa Dorotéa. \* \* \* To this place the presidio and mission of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo were removed.)

In one of his reports to the viceroy, Escandon recommended the reduction of the salaries of the captains of some of the new towns, among them "el presidio del Espíritu Santo," at which place he also proposed to establish a new town. And he also shows that after founding the town of Reynosa, he sent orders to the captain of the

troops of Espíritu Santo, Juan Orobio y Basterra, to found the projected town on the Nueces river with the families that had gone out from Nuevo Leon.

In an application for a grant of land, made by Captain José Vasquez Borrego in 1750, in mentioning the settlements and their courses and distances from the land he asked for, he mentions "la Bahía del Espíritu Santo, now removed to Santa Dorotéa," showing that he then knew of this removal. And a testimonio of this application is in the proceedings or expediente of the title among the ancient Spanish archives of Laredo, Texas.

After the removal it continued to be a presidio within Nuevo Santander until the boundary was changed to the Nueces river by a decree first adopted in 1805.

By the royal decree of September 10, 1772, the presidio of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo was made a "plaza fuerte" among the number composing the cordon of such it established from the Gulf of California to the Mexican Gulf, and it continued to be such as long as Spain held dominion over the country.

While a full account of how Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara came to be in the presidio of la Bahía with a force of about 700 men would be too great a digression here, still it would form a most interesting chapter in the life of that Mexican patriot, or in a history of the campaign inaugurated by him and lost by Toledo in Texas.

Having raised at his own expense about 500 men, principally from Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana, including some Frenchmen and Spaniards, and among the Americans, as officers, such men as Magee, Kemper, Lockett, Perry, and Ross, brave men with some knowledge of the art of war as then practised, Gutierrez de Lara proceeded to Nacogdoches, where the troops of that place and those of Adaes joined him; and by means of his proclamation published there he was enabled to increase his forces to 700 brave and determined men, thoroughly skilled in the use of fire-arms. And having spent some time there in organizing his forces and distributing arms, ammunition, etc., he took up the line of march toward Bexar; but as soon as he crossed the Colorado river, he rapidly marched upon the presidio of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo, then garrisoned by a company of royal troops raised in Texas; because he knew the place was fortified and would afford an advantageous base for his succeeding operations, within ten leagues of the

port of Copano, through which he could receive assistance from New Orleans by water. And on his arrival at this presidio in the early part of November, 1812, he was joined by most of the garrison, only a few having fled; and so he became master of the place without resistance. As he knew royal troops in considerable numbers had been massed in Bexar, he immediately added some betterments to the fortifications, built parietines across the ends of the streets, and gathered in all the subsistence possible to enable him to stand a siege.

On the seventh of the same month, 2000 royal troops, commanded by Manuel Salcedo and Simon Herrera, the first governor of Texas, and the second governor of Nuevo Leon, arrived and immediately began the siege. A considerable battle was fought on the fifteenth; and from that time for three months a close siege, with all of its privations and casualties, was maintained; and in the continuous sorties and assaults the besieged lost many of their most valuable men, among them Colonel Magee, while the loss of the royalists was much greater in men, horses, and pack mules. At last, on the 9th of February, 1813, Salcedo made an assault on the fort with increased energy and daring, in which some of his troops reached the street walls with their scaling ladders, causing the besieged to put up a white flag for a parley, which Salcedo and Herrera accepted, withdrawing their forces beyond the range of the guns of the fort—an act fraught with fatal consequences for them.

At the beginning of the parley, Salcedo demanded five of the principal officers of the besieged forces, to be placed by him at the mercy of the viceroy, which was sternly repelled by Gutierrez and his officers, with the declaration that the whole force, as well Mexicans as foreigners, should be allowed to retire with all belonging to them to wherever it might suit them; else they would defend themselves to the ultimate extremity. This being refused by Salcedo, and the negotiations thereby ended, the bells of the little church in the fort suddenly began to ring rapidly and violently to animate the besieged to renew their combat; and though Salcedo came again to the assault, he was completely repulsed on all sides, with heavy losses.

This glorious success on the part of the besieged sent terror into the hearts of the royalists, causing them to clamor for a retreat to

Bexar, which they finally began at night thirteen days thereafter. And the panic increased amid the darkness of the night, causing disorder in the ranks, from which Salcedo lost a third of his forces, some of them going over to the enemy and the balance deserting to their homes. Gutierrez sent a detachment in pursuit of the retreating royalists, which soon succeeded in capturing much of their equipment and many of their horses and pack mules, all of which the captors took into the fort, without any attempt on part of the retreating forces to rescue them. Animated by his success and the increases of forces, Gutierrez renewed the pursuit, and on March 29th, after the failure of Salcedo's attempt to ambush him, succeeded in capturing the whole retreating force, and afterward caused the two governors and twelve Spanish officers to be executed on the Salado creek.

But this digression has been extended far enough, without pursuing it to the fatal end of the campaign in Toledo's defeat by Arredondo on the Gallinas creek.

On the arrival of twelve of the survivors of this defeat at la Bahía del Espíritu Santo with the news of Arredondo's complete success instead of receiving protection, they were put to death by the men left there by Gutierrez, who declared in favor of the royalists, after enacting this least, but most detestable, massacre among the number that occurred in this presidio.

Arredondo soon sent Captain Luciano Garcia to reorganize the company formerly garrisoning the presidio and complete the number of men and horses required by the regulation of 1772.

In May, 1817, Colonel Perry and Major Gordon, who had gone with General Mina from Galveston island, then called Isle of Galves, to Soto la Marina, and there leaving him, had coasted back to Copano bay in their brig, which they left there in a small creek, marched thence with their company of fifty men upon, and laid siege to, la Bahía del Espíritu Santo; the garrison having shut themselves up in the presidio. But while in the most critical part of the assault, they were surprised in their rear by 200 soldiers from Bexar; and in the obstinate battle that ensued, they and all their men were massacred, not one surviving to tell the sad story.

From that time this place of massacres remained a plaza fuerte till the independence of Mexico, and a presidio under the republic



until it was declared to be a town with the name of Goliad, by act of the congress of Coahuila and Texas, passed February 4, 1829.<sup>1</sup>

The last and most noted massacre at la Bahía del Espíritu Santo was that of Fannin's command in 1836, the brutalities and horrors of which have been portrayed in the works of modern writers of Texas history.

After the independence of Texas, the settlements at Goliad were made on the north side of the river and soon became the principal town; and now the old building of the mission of la Bahía del Espíritu Santo stands there on the south bank of the San Antonio river, where the passing traveler may see it without conjecturing the origin of its name or its connection with the history of Texas, coming down from 1519, when Pineda first described and named the bay into which the waters of the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers flow.

<sup>1</sup> Decree No. 73, Laws and Decrees of Coahuila and Texas, p. 112.